

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend claims 1, 10, 12, 15 and 16 and cancel claim 8, as indicated below.

Claim 1 (currently amended) A defect free semipermeable composite membrane comprising:

- (i) a support layer which provides mechanical strength and is selected from the group consisting of extruded porous material, non woven material, woven material, braided material, knitted material, any other rigid or flexible organic or inorganic permeable material,
- (ii) a barrier layer which provides selective separation and is selected from the group consisting of at least one hydrophobic polymer as a major component, and at least one hydrophilic polymer as a minor component,
- (iii) a middle layer covalently bonded to the support layer which covers the rough surface and defects of the support layer, and provides binding between said support and said barrier layers.

Claim 2 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said middle layer and said outside barrier layer are formed from either the same coating solution or different coating solutions.

Claim 3 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said middle layer is further selected from the group consisting of epoxy, polyurethane, silicone, any other adhesive and any other organic or inorganic material which has excellent compatibility between the support and the barrier layers to bond them together.

Claim 4 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said composite membrane is in the form of a hollow fiber.

Claim 5 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said composite membrane is in the

form of a tube.

Claim 6 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said composite membrane is in the form of a sheet.

Claim 7 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said composite membrane is in the form of a sphere.

Claim 8. Cancelled.

Claim 9 (original) The membrane of claim 1, wherein said membrane has a burst pressure of 10 to 500 psi, a pure water permeability of 1 to 500 gfd/psi, and a rejection of 0 to 100% towards poly(ethylene oxide) molecular weight marker having an average molecular weight of 200,000 daltons.

Claim 10 (withdrawn, currently amended) A process for producing a composite membrane as claimed in claim 1 comprising:

- (i) preparing a homogeneous coating solution containing 8-60% by weight of hydrophobic polymers and 1-40% by weight of hydrophilic polymers, 1-20% by weight of inorganic additives, 1-20% by weight of other organic monomers and additives, and the remaining solvent,
- (ii) coating a support with a viscous liquid, which is selected from the group consisting of said homogeneous polymer coating solution, epoxy, polyurethane, silicone, monomer and any other adhesive, to covalently bind to and cover the rough surface and defects of said support and to provide a smooth surface and binding for a second coating,
- (iii) coating said support again with either the same solution used for the first coating or a different coating solution containing polymers and monomers which can react with the monomers in the first coating layer,
- (iv) coagulating said polymer coating layers on top of said support to form a defect free composite membrane in a coagulation bath equipped with an ultrasonic device, which

generates ultrasonic vibration to enhance mass transfer and to speed up phase inversion from liquid to solid phase of said coating layers,

(v) removing said solvents and additives from said coagulated membrane in a leaching bath equipped with an ultrasonic generator to enhance mass transfer,

(vi) controlling and monitoring coating thickness and coating quality by laser sensor and sending feedback to dope delivery system to control dope delivery rate according to detected membrane thickness,

(vii) collecting said composite membrane at a speed of 5 to 600 feet per minute with a take-up wheel immersed in a water bath equipped with an ultrasonic sonicator to remove chemical residuals from said membrane,

(viii) switching to another take-up wheel when one wheel is full to continue collecting said membrane, switching membrane collection between two take-up wheels allows a continuous production around clock[[.]],

(ix) curing said membrane either at ambient temperature or at an elevated temperature depending on the adhesives utilized to bond said support and said membrane together[[.]],

(x) optionally treating said composite membrane with a bleach containing 100 – 120,000 ppm free chlorine at ambient or elevated temperature to increase membrane water permeability by 2 to 10 folds compared to a control membrane never exposed to a chlorine treatment.

Claim 11 (withdrawn) The process according to claim 10, said process produces high quality coatings and defect free membranes, which are independent of chemical composition and physical structure of said support, which is selected from the group consisting of flat sheet, hollow fiber, tube, rope, cord, solid wire, a string of hollow and solid spheres, and other continuous materials.

Claim 12 (withdrawn, currently amended) A process for strengthening the binding between the support layer and the barrier layer of a composite membrane as claimed in claim 1, wherein said composite membrane is first impregnated with a binding agent

from the support side while leaving the top side of said membrane free of said binding agent, then cured either at ambient or at elevated temperature depending on said binding agent (adhesive) utilized to give a binding agent reinforced composite membrane, which is free of defect and has a burst pressure of at least 100 psi, a pure water permeability of 1 to 1000 gfd/psi, and a rejection of 0 to 100% towards poly(ethylene oxide) molecular weight marker having an average molecular weight of 200,000 daltons.

Claim 13 (withdrawn) The process according to claim **12**, wherein said binding agent is selected from the group consisting of epoxy, polyurethane, silicone, any other adhesive and any other organic or inorganic material which has excellent compatibility between the support and the barrier layers to bond them together.

Claim 14 (withdrawn) The process according to claim **12**, wherein said process includes an optional post treatment of said membrane with a bleach containing 100 – 120,000 ppm free chlorine at ambient or elevated temperature to increase membrane water permeability by 2 to 10 folds compared to a control membrane never exposed to a chlorine treatment.

Claim 15 (withdrawn, currently amended) A spinneret, which has an inlet at the top for a tubular support, and multiple inlets on the side for at least two polymer solutions to coat said tubular support with multiple layers to form a defect free composite hollow fiber membrane as claimed in claim 1.

Claim 16 (withdrawn, currently amended) A method of utilizing said a composite membranes membrane as claimed in claim 1 comprising filtering a substance by a filtering step selected from the group of filtering steps consisting of,

- (i) filtering orange juice containing suspended particles to give a clear filtrate and concentrated orange juice,
- (ii) filtering lemon juice containing suspended particles to give a clear filtrate and concentrated lemon juice,

- (iii) filtering any other fruit juice containing suspended particles to give a clear filtered fruit juice and a fruit juice concentrate,
- (iv) filtering red wine containing suspended particles to give a sparkling red wine,
- (v) filtering white wine containing suspended particles to give a sparkling white wine,
- (vi) filtering milk to give a clear filtrate and a white milk concentrate,
- (vii) filtering soymilk to give a clear and light yellow colored filtrate and a white soymilk concentrate,
- (viii) filtering surface or ground water containing suspended particles to give clear potable water,
- (ix) filtering municipal wastewater to give clear reusable and dischargeable water,
- (x) filtering industrial wastewater to give clear reusable and dischargeable water,
- (xi) filtering air containing airborne particles to give filtered air free of particles,
- (xii) filtering industrial gases containing airborne particles to give filtered gases free of particles,
- (xiii) filtering natural gas containing airborne particles to give filtered natural gas free of particles, and
- (xiv) separating small molecules and ions from macromolecules by dialysis.